

Description

The "Princess of Hassleben" was a young noblewoman buried in what is now the richest ancient grave group ever excavated in Germany, located near the town of Hassleben in Thuringia. Her remains were analyzed as sample R11877. Her burial was extraordinary in its wealth: Roman glass beads, golden fibulae, and a gold coin placed in her mouth — a "Charon's obol," the Roman tradition of providing the dead with payment for the ferryman to the afterlife. She was also buried with a small pet dog, indicating her high social standing and the personal nature of the burial.

She lived during the 5th century, in a period when the Elbe Germanic tribes of Thuringia occupied a complex political position — serving as Roman allies against neighboring tribes, and in exchange gaining access to Roman luxury goods, administrative contact, and cultural influence. The Hassleben cemetery, representing the wealthiest ancient burial group in Germany, reveals a noble class deeply enmeshed in Roman culture while maintaining a distinctly Germanic identity.

Among the most extraordinary artifacts from this cemetery is a comb etched with the oldest written Germanic word ever discovered. This finding highlights the literacy and cultural sophistication of the elite community the Princess of Hassleben belonged to. A young woman adorned in Roman luxury, buried with Roman funerary rites, she lived in a society navigating the complex and often violent twilight of Roman influence in Central Europe. Her grave is among the most complete individual portraits from this transitional period — a direct biological link to the noble class that bridged Germanic and Roman worlds in the centuries before Rome's collapse.

Modern population	Distance
Swedish	2.900
Danish	3.018
Norwegian	3.038
Icelander	3.108
Orcadian	3.481
Irish	3.616

Modern population	Distance
Czech	3.809
Welsh	3.838
Breton	3.839
Scottish	3.867

Source

Date: 1743–1793 CE

mtDNA: H3h

Location: Germany

Research: Stable population structure in Europe since the Iron Age, despite high mobility

Sample(s): R11877.SG